

THE BOX

July 1–31



The Ontological Cowboy, Courtesy of the artist

Marie Losier

Electrocute Your Stars, 2004
Running time: 8 mins.

The Ontological Cowboy, 2005
Running time: 15:25 mins.

Born in Boulogne, France, Marie Losier lives in New York City where she works as a curator and filmmaker. Losier's work is often informed by her passion for cinema history and an affinity for good-natured anarchy. In *The Touch Retouched* (2002), she injects herself into a segment of Ingmar Bergman's first English-language feature, *The Touch*, replacing Elliott Gould's presence with her own. *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (2002), which Losier describes as a "funny tragedy," finds the artist in the role of the famous French saint and martyr in an excerpt from the canonical Carl Dreyer film. *Broken Blossom* (2002) depicts Losier as an actress competing with Lillian Gish for the lead role in the D. W. Griffith classic.

About three years ago, Losier met Mike Kuchar who, along with his brother, George, was a pioneering figure in the 1960s' American underground filmmaking movement. "I met him at the Millenium Workshop. He was sitting in the corner looking bored to death, eating a pint of eggnog ice cream. He caught my attention right away with his long grey beard dipped in the ice cream." The two became fast friends, and Losier created a portrait of him, *Bird, Bath and Beyond* (2003), one of her first works in 16mm.

Losier eventually crossed paths with Kuchar's brother, George, who was spending the summer in New York, away from his home in San Francisco. Compelled to make a companion piece to *Bird*, Losier created the portrait *Electrocute Your Stars*. Like Losier, the Kuchar brothers skillfully blend camp, pop, and cinematic influences with an underground aesthetic in their films. *Electrocute* begins with George Kuchar's head standing in for the lion's in the famous MGM logo, followed by a series of screaming, B-horror movie graphics announcing the film's title. Clips of Dorothy's house from *The Wizard of Oz* spinning in the twister are superimposed over Kuchar, whose voiceover talks about the weather. The second half of the film shows Kuchar reading comic books, with a shot from *Psycho*'s shower scene superimposed over him. Kuchar's voiceover discusses his most famous film, *Hold Me While I'm Naked* (1966), while an offscreen (and eventually onscreen) accomplice showers him with bubbles. The inclusion of the bubble-blower (an intentional misstep) is a wonderful tribute to Kuchar and *Hold Me*, which famously includes a scene where the lead actress, fed up with shooting for hours in a drafty shower, gets sick and quits the film. Kuchar worked the "real-life" scene into the finished film.

Included in this year's Whitney Museum of Art Biennial, *The Ontological Cowboy* is Losier's experimental documentary on playwright Richard Foreman, director of the Ontological-Hysterical Theater in New York. The film features the lead actors from Foreman's *King Cowboy Rufus Rules the Universe*, a play about an Englishman with delusions of cosmic omnipotence. The soundtrack consists of Losier's offscreen interview with Foreman in which he discusses his unique approach to theater. Losier met Foreman eight years ago after a friend asked her to make props for Foreman's play *Hotel F****. Impressed by his book-filled house, which also included a 10-foot penis on wheels and other surreal artifacts, Losier dreamed of making a film about Foreman. "He was very skeptical and he wouldn't do anything I wanted. I decided to use his actors and sets to recreate what I loved about their performances and spent many nights after the audience left the theater, filming the actors. I realized as I was shooting that the performances are the best portrait of Richard. It is all him."

David Filipi
Curator, Film/Video

Visit www.marielosier.net for more information on the artist. All quotations from Marie Losier are taken from an e-mail conversation with the author in May 2006.

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